



INTRODUCTION



PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park was originally established by Public Law 91-14 on December 2, 1969, as a national historic site. That designation was changed to national historical park on December 28, 1980. Subsequent to the park's establishment as a unit of the national park system, several documents and studies have been produced to guide the planning and management of park resources. These include the 1977 *Master Plan*, 1979 *Development Concept Plan*, 1995 *Statement for Management*, 1996 *Resources Management Plan*, and 1997 *Strategic Plan*. Other resource-specific documents have also been produced to guide interpretation and resource preservation.

The park has been operating under the 1977 *Master Plan*. Although that plan provided initial guidance and direction for the park's early years, it is now almost fully implemented. A comprehensive general management plan is needed to provide long-term guidance. Since the 1977 plan was approved, several factors have resulted in changed conditions or a better understanding of the ramifications of existing conditions that need to be addressed in a new general management plan.

This general management plan will explain the actions required to make the Texas White House and other resources available to the public and the preservation requirements necessary to ensure their continued existence. It will also guide the overall management, development, and use of the park in ways that best serve visitors while preserving the historic character, structures, and other resources of the park. It is the intent of this planning effort to provide a comprehensive direction for the park for the next 10 to 15 years.

As part of this general management plan, an environmental impact statement has been prepared according to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR 1500-1508). It assesses the impacts that potential actions may have on resources in the affected environment.



BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL AND STATE HISTORICAL PARKS

Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park is in the “Hill Country” of south-central Texas, a landscape of forested hills, deep canyons, and secluded valleys. The park is made up of two districts: one in Johnson City and one at the LBJ Ranch near Stonewall. The Johnson City district lies 47 miles west of Austin and 63 miles north of San Antonio, while the LBJ Ranch district lies 14 miles west of Johnson City (see the Region and Vicinity maps). The general area is drained by the Pedernales River, a tributary of the Colorado River. The Johnson City district focuses on the roots and ancestry of the president; it includes the park’s visitor center, headquarters offices, boyhood home, Johnson settlement, and an education center (see the Existing Conditions – Johnson City District map). The LBJ Ranch district focuses primarily on Lyndon Johnson the rancher and president; it includes the Junction School, reconstructed birthplace, Texas White House, show barn, ranch lands and cattle, and other structures related to Johnson’s life in the Texas Hill Country (see the Existing Conditions – LBJ District maps). In-depth information on the specific resources and visitor use of the national historical park can be found in the “Affected Environment” chapter of “Part Two: Environmental Analysis.”

Closely associated with the national historical park is the Lyndon B. Johnson State Historical Park, which is operated by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and was also initiated by President Johnson. Interpretation at the state historical park concentrates on the natural and cultural resources of the Texas Hill Country and the environment that greatly influenced the future president. The park provides exhibits, orientation films, and an educational sales area in the visitor center. Other activities, including visiting the Sauer Beckman living history farm, viewing wild animals, swimming, and baseball, are also available. The NPS tour of the LBJ Ranch begins at the state historical park.

The mission of the state historical park is changing to a more regional focus as a result of a recent emphasis by the state park system to become more self-supporting. There is an increased impetus for the state historical park to strengthen its partnership with the national historical park.

Together, the national and state historical parks provide an unparalleled opportunity for understanding Lyndon B. Johnson, the 36th president of the United States.

LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

Public Law 91-134, December 2, 1969, authorized the secretary of the interior “in order to preserve in public ownership historically significant properties associated with the life of Lyndon B. Johnson” to acquire “by donation or by purchase with donated funds” lands for the national historic site. The act authorized “to be appropriated not more than \$180,000.00” to provide for development. Only the boyhood home and birthplace were specifically included in this legislation (see appendix A).

Senate 2363-1980, Park Omnibus Bill, Title VI, Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park, December 28, 1980, amended P.L. 91-134 by changing “national historic site” to “national historical park,” raising the development ceiling to \$4,100,000, and authorizing the acquisition of land by purchase with appropriated funds not to exceed \$1,400,000 (see appendix A).

The Johnson family has donated significant structures and tracts of land in both park districts. The boundaries in 1998 encompass 1,570 acres between the two districts, with 674.15 acres in federal ownership; the remainder is in private ownership.

PARK PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENTS

The purpose of the park as stated in the establishing legislation is “to preserve in public ownership historically significant properties associated with the life of Lyndon B. Johnson.” The park through public input and analysis has further defined the purpose as follows:

- To research, preserve, and interpret significant resources and influences associated with the life and heritage of Lyndon B. Johnson.
- To provide a variety of opportunities to experience the local and regional context that shaped the last frontier president, informed his policies and programs, and defined his legacy.

Unlike park purpose statements, which are based on the legislative mandate, park significance statements are based on the resources. Significance statements capture what attributes make the park resources and values important enough to warrant national park designation. They also help define the park’s interpretive focus. With the passage of time a park may gain significance for something that was never envisioned in the enabling legislation. This may reflect new ways of looking at existing resources or may result from the identification of new resources. Ultimately, recognition of the significant resources further ensures their values and protection when implementing park management actions.

With public input the national historical park has defined its significance as encompassing three broad areas:

1. *The resources of the Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park document and communicate the life and heritage of the 36th president of the United States. Here, as in few other historical parks, one can see the lands and structures that represent the origins, ancestry, full life span, and continuing legacy of a major historical figure.*

The Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park and Johnson City are interwoven historically and economically. Both contain historic structures in their original locations that are on the National Register of Historic Places and provide insight into President Johnson’s early influences as well as a window into the frontier life of the Texas Hill Country.

The Johnson settlement is a comprehensive historic scene from which the last of the frontier presidents gained identity, strength, and values.

President Johnson was born, lived, died, and was buried on the LBJ Ranch. The closeness of the reconstructed birthplace, his grandparents home, and the family cemetery where the president is buried reflects a deep attachment for place and heritage.

The Junction School is where Lyndon Johnson began his formal education and as president signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

The boyhood home is where Lyndon Johnson spent his formative years and launched his political career.

2. *President Johnson had a deep and abiding connection with the Hill Country of central Texas and with the people of Texas. He used his experience with the people, land, and resources to advocate his local, national, and international programs. It was this connection and his commitment to a government that works for people that sustained him throughout his life.*

Immediately following the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, the Johnson family home was transformed into the Texas White House. This historic ranch house served as a busy office, residential command post, as well as a quiet refuge for the Johnson family during both the good and the tumultuous times.

The operation of the LBJ Ranch is critical to understanding the image of a rancher/president. President Johnson's desire to demonstrate ranching culture and conservation practices prompted him to stipulate that the property remain a working ranch and not a sterile relic of the past.

Johnson City, Stonewall, and surrounding areas reflect Lyndon Johnson's political legacy and its continuing economic impact on the region.

3. *President Johnson was directly involved in the restoration and preservation of the sites within the park. The Texas White House remains Mrs. Johnson's residence, and the Johnson family continues to be involved in the park's activities.*

The partnership of the Lyndon B. Johnson National and State Historical Parks began as a vision of President Johnson. He was the driving force behind the planning, acquisition, and initial development of the two parks. This cooperative effort continues today.

Mrs. Johnson's advocacy of conservation, preservation, and beautification continues to focus national attention on the legacy of the Johnson administration.

INTERPRETIVE THEMES

Interpretation is a process of education designed to stimulate curiosity and convey ideas and information to people. It is part of the visitor experience. The National Park Service uses interpretive themes as a framework from which interpretive programming can be developed. Through the interpretive themes listed below, Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park will provide the visitor with an understanding of the life and heritage of the 36th president of the United States. Visitors will have a variety of opportunities to experience the local and regional context that shaped the last "frontier President," informed his policies and programs, and defined his legacy. Seven primary interpretive themes were developed after a workshop held on August 5 and 6, 1997, with university professors, interested parties, planning staff, and park employees.

- Lyndon Johnson's life reflects his deep commitment to the enrichment of all Americans through governmental action.
- The environment and community of the Texas Hill Country shaped the character of Lyndon Johnson and in return he improved the quality of life in the region.
- Lyndon Johnson's family provided unique influences that helped prepare him to become a U.S. president.

- The complex image of Lyndon Johnson was part personality, part creation, and part myth.
- Mrs. Johnson was an advocate and significant influence during the Johnson administration and continues to have a notable effect on the American public long after leaving the White House and 25 years after the president's death.
- The Viet Nam War overshadowed President Johnson's other foreign policy initiatives and much of his domestic agenda.
- The office of the presidency, the value of public service, and participation in the processes of government are fundamental messages of presidential parks.

MISSION GOALS FOR THE PARK

The *Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park Strategic Plan* of September 1997 describes mission goals for general park management and operation, resource management, park protection, visitor use and interpretation, facilities and infrastructure, and partnerships. Also included in that document are actions necessary to bring about the desired conditions.

The mission goals for Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park are as follows:

Goal 1: The natural environment and cultural heritage of the Texas Hill Country are protected and maintained through a regional network of private and public stewardship. Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park is a full partner in the research, resource preservation, and technical assistance integral to sustaining public awareness of the connection between influence of place and the programs of the Johnson administration.

Goal 2: The public, provided with a variety of options for direct and indirect access, can identify and value the significance of President Johnson, and the policies and programs of his administration, in the context of his ancestry, full life span, and continuing legacy. Major sites related to the Johnsons' legacy — the Presidential Library, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, and the national and state historical parks — provide a “backbone” for regional tourism and contribute significantly to a national network of presidential sites and the “story of the presidency.”

Goal 3: Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park partners internally, within divisions and across division lines, and across park boundaries with other National Park Service, private, public, and governmental entities to maximize our strengths and minimize our deficiencies. Park employees have a comprehensive knowledge of and practice a strong conservation and preservation ethic.

PRESERVATION PHILOSOPHY

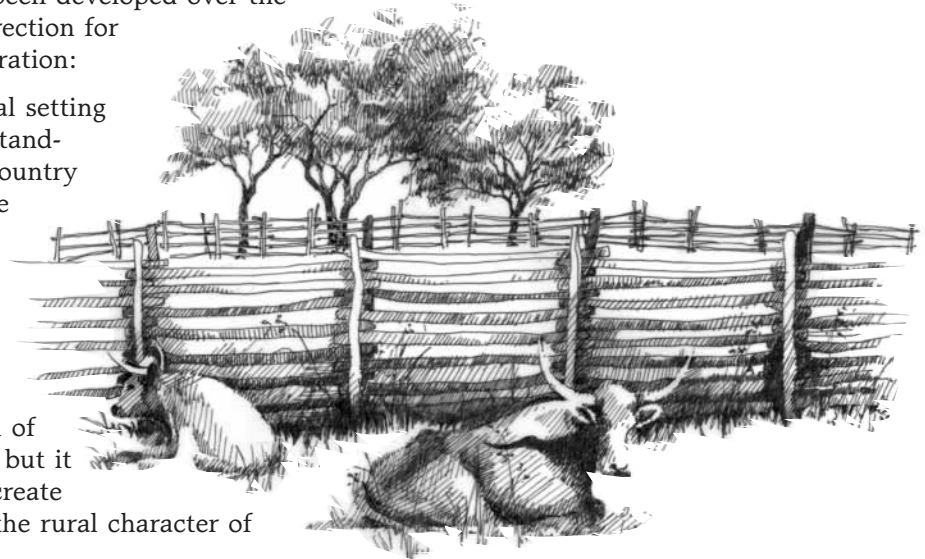
The preservation philosophy at Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park can be described on two levels. The first level refers to those concepts of park management that have evolved over the years, some of which derive from the actions or statements of the president, some of which derive from an understanding of the resource,



and some of which derive from agency goals and beliefs about preservation and interpretation. The second level is more difficult to describe. It comes from the belief that the park is only one important facet of the LBJ story and that the Hill Country, with its amazing physical record of resources, has a much larger story to tell than the park alone can tell. Out of that belief comes the realization that the National Park Service cannot work alone but must develop partnerships to interpret and preserve the resources and legacy of President Lyndon B. Johnson in the Hill Country. Together, the levels provide guidance for the preservation of the structures, objects, and landscapes of the park and for the interpretation, education, and enjoyment of all Johnson-related resources for future generations.

The first level is guidance that has been developed over the years and that provides practical direction for everyday management and administration:

Maintaining the rural agricultural setting of the ranch is key to an understanding of the isolation of the Hill Country during the president's youth, the work ethic of its residents, an understanding of a Texas cattle operation, and the origin of many of the president's ideas, programs, and legislative concerns. Obviously the National Park Service cannot purchase all of the land surrounding the ranch, but it can work with its neighbors to create viewshed easements that allow the rural character of the ranch to be preserved.



President Johnson spoke of his desire that the ranch operations not become “a sterile relic of the past.” It was his wish that the ranch continue as an operating cattle ranch using the best modern scientific methods available. The national historical park continues to maintain and raise the same genetic strain of Herefords raised by the president and has honored his desire to use modern ranching and farming practices.

As a general guide, the park uses a timeframe of 1963–1973 when determining to what period ranch structures should be restored. This is the period of the Texas White House and the five years leading up to the president's death. The national historical park tells a broader story than just this 10-year span, but it is this period that is most significant to the Johnson story at the ranch. Exceptions to this general guide refer mostly to changes made by Mrs. Johnson in subsequent years. As her legacy has grown over the past quarter century since the president's death, the National Park Service has endeavored to honor her changes.

To preserve its rural character and not contribute to degradation of the visitor experience, private vehicles should not be allowed except for special occasions. There is nowhere to park vehicles that would not visually intrude on the scene, and there would be no easy way to turn back visitors when available parking is full. The existing bus tour provides an opportunity for all visitors to see the ranch without overrunning the resource.

In Johnson City, the park structures represent several decades. To try to re-create one era over the entire site would be impossible because some structures are reconstructions and others never existed side by side. The landscapes are likewise problematic. Therefore, each is maintained and interpreted to the period of its greatest significance.

An important part of the interpretive story at the settlement is the period of the cattle drive in the mid-to late-19th century. Yet it is difficult today to visualize what the landscape looked like. Thus, the park has begun a program of prescribed burns to re-create the appearance of a portion of the settlement at the time of its development.

On the second level is the greater preservation and interpretive goal of connecting all of the resources of the Hill Country that tell a more comprehensive story of the life and legacy of President Lyndon B. Johnson. The president felt a close affinity with the people and landscape of the Hill Country and often spoke of its influence on him. There was a sense of peace and calm, a sense of being one with the land that he felt strongly. The Hill Country was his special haven and the place where he returned for rejuvenation whenever his energy level was low. He did not forget the Hill Country while in Washington, and the evidence of this lies all over south-central Texas.

The Hill Country contains structures and institutions that tell a much broader story than the park can tell with its more specific family-related resources. This record is overseen by governmental, institutional, and private entities who could be enlisted as partners to help educate the public about other facets of the LBJ story. These resources also help visitors to find a personal connection with the many programs he championed as a congressman, senator, and president, e.g., the war on poverty, rural electrification, and education reform.

The national historical park would like to provide a link between all of these resources to tell a more complete story, to encourage the understanding and preservation of these important structures and institutions, and to add value to the communities of the Hill Country by drawing attention to their connection with Lyndon Johnson and the economic viability that such resources may have.

ISSUES AND IMPACT TOPICS

Specific planning issues and concerns were identified and impact topics developed. Impact topics include subjects that are generally of sufficient environmental concern as to require discussion within the plan. Other impacts were identified based on federal laws or environmental statutes, regulations, and executive orders; NPS management policies; and NPS knowledge of limited or easily impacted resources. Occasionally an impact topic may be identified but cannot be dealt with in the plan. A brief rationale for the selection of each impact topic is given below, as well as the rationale for dismissing specific topics from further consideration.

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REVEREND DOCTOR BILLY GRAHAM
LBJ: IMAGES OF A VIBRANT LIFE

Impact Topics Considered in this Document

Cultural Resources. Several federal historic preservation laws and regulations mandate that the National Park Service consider the effects of its actions on cultural resources under its jurisdiction. The alternatives described in this *Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* propose a variety of actions (listed below) that would affect the cultural resources of Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park.

- adaptively rehabilitating or restoring the interior of the Texas White House, as several threats to the house have been identified, including electrical problems and inadequate load-bearing capacity of floors
- adaptively rehabilitating the interiors of historic buildings and structures throughout the park
- restoring the exteriors of the communications trailers and Junction School
- possibly restoring or reconstructing cultural landscapes at the settlement and boyhood home in Johnson City and the reconstructed birthplace at the LBJ Ranch in accordance with a cultural landscape report
- using the historic property leasing program within the Johnson City Historic District

In order to assess the impact of these and other proposed actions on the park's cultural resources, as well as to consider ways to avoid, reduce, or mitigate adverse impacts, cultural resources will be addressed as an impact topic.

Soils. Erosion along the Pedernales has been a major problem during floods. As a result, flooding of the Pedernales River has caused some bank erosion along the south side of the river within the boundary. Around 1980 the National Park Service constructed some rock gabion structures on the south side of the river across from the Texas White House. This bank stabilization effort has resulted in reduced soil erosion. However, bank erosion continues downstream, primarily along the north bank and within the LBJ Ranch district boundary. Continued livestock grazing and nutria burrowing in all alternatives would also have some effect on bank stabilization. Therefore, erosion concerns related to soils is included for discussion.

Water Resources and Water Quality. Water impoundments are important to the operation and historic interpretation of the ranch, and demand for water is increasing in the vicinity of the park. The allocation of local water sources is an issue as is clarification of water rights. While the Department of the Interior owns water rights, it does not own all water rights. NPS water rights are attached to lands donated by the Johnson family.

Maintaining the legal authorization for current and future park water supply needs is an important issue. Water resources is not only an impact topic, but also must be addressed as a policy issue with implications for management and development. This can only be done following a study of park water rights. This plan identifies in several places where such concerns exist and calls for a study of water rights.

There are no major surface water quality issues.

Floodplains. The floodplain of Town Creek in the Johnson City district has not been fully delineated. However, park development has occurred in the area along the creek south of the settlement and that area is the likely location for additional development.

At the LBJ Ranch district several historic structures (inhabited and uninhabited) lie within the 100-year floodplain, including the Junction School, LBJ birthplace, Sam Ealy Johnson, Sr. farmhouse, the Bailey house, and the cedar guest house (see Floodplains – LBJ Ranch District map in the “Affected Environment” chapter of “Part Two: Environmental Analysis”). In addition, the Texas White House and the Lyndon B. Johnson State Historical Park maintenance facility lie within the 500-year floodplain. Some joint development actions are proposed for the state historical park maintenance area. Because the potential for impacts on historic structures in the 500-year floodplain is present and because of the frequency of heavy flooding, this topic is included for discussion in this document.

Socioeconomics and Visitor Use and Experience. The national historical park is one of the largest employers in Blanco County and has a significant economic impact on Johnson City, Stonewall, and in turn, Blanco and Gillespie Counties. This plan identifies increased staffing needs for the park, increased interpretation of park resources, and possible new ways of experiencing park resources. Each of these would affect the amount of time visitors spend in the park and their understanding of the resources. The more understanding and enjoyment the visitor perceives, the greater likelihood of a longer stay in the local communities or a return visit at a later date. This could result in an expanded economic impact on the communities, such as increased overnight accommodations, services, and restaurants.

No contingency was provided in the *Master Plan* for the Texas White House after Mrs. Johnson’s passing. She lives in the house under a life estate. However, upon her death, the National Park Service anticipates opening the house to interpretive use by visitors. Initially, there would likely be a large number of visitors wanting to see the Texas White House. With the Secret Service security concerns removed, visitors would have a much freer access to the immediate area around the house and would likely increase their length of stay. How to interpret and protect the house and its contents needs to be addressed in the plan.

In the years following implementation of the *Master Plan*, a better understanding of the resources to be managed by the National Park Service at the ranch has been realized. Viewsheds adjacent to the boundary would be subject to development that could significantly change the character of the ranch. Several structures, including a guest house and telephone communications building within the Texas White House complex but outside the park boundary, would remain in the Johnson family. Any additional development or changes to these buildings could adversely affect the setting of the complex. The park uses a deeded easement through the English Park to exit the LBJ Ranch district upon completion of tours. Development within the English Park could significantly affect the visitor experience or result in discontinuance of the use of this route. Varying deed restrictions affect the use, management, and preservation of the LBJ Ranch district.

Visitor numbers have declined considerably since 1980 with a corresponding aging of the visiting public (see discussion on visitation in the “Affected Environment” chapter of “Part Two: Environmental Analysis”). Park staff has also declined, causing the curtailment of interpretive programs and reduction of the ability to maintain a park that is much larger than it was in 1977 when the original park master plan was written.

Impact Topics Dismissed from Further Analysis

Air Quality. Under the action alternatives, local air quality would be temporarily and minimally affected by construction dust and vehicle emissions. Also, emission impacts from propane-fueled buses would be short term and negligible and would not have any serious effects on air quality. Standard construction practices would be used to minimize airborne dust levels in the work area. Long-term impacts on air quality from the proposed development would be negligible. Visitation would be limited and not expected to appreciably affect air quality. Therefore, air quality was dismissed as an impact topic in this document.

Vegetation. Maintenance of the vegetation at Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park would continue, with some removal and replacement of trees, as well as rotational grazing of the grasslands. Proposed actions are not expected to have a major impact on vegetation. Thus, this topic will not be addressed further in this document.

Biotic Communities. Within the two park districts, there is some diversity in land use, consisting mostly of a rural historic community (Johnson City district) setting and ranch and agricultural lands (LBJ Ranch district). None of the actions proposed is expected to affect biotic communities. Therefore, this topic was dismissed from further analysis in this document.

Special Status Species (Threatened, Endangered, and Species of Concern). Based on the most current available information, there are no known federally listed or state protected species within the Johnson City and LBJ Ranch districts. NPS informal consultations with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service according to section 7 of the Endangered Species Act are documented in appendix B. Thus, special status species will not be addressed as an impact topic in this document.

Wetlands. None of the proposed actions is expected to affect wetlands. Thus, wetlands was dismissed as an impact topic in this document.

Prime and Unique Farmlands. According to the Natural Resource Conservation Service (formerly Soil Conservation Service), prime farmland soils lie within both the Johnson City and LBJ Ranch districts. Based on the minimal proposed ground-disturbing actions, no prime and unique farmland soils would be adversely affected because most actions would occur in previously disturbed areas. Therefore, this topic will not be addressed further in this document.

Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations. Executive Order 12898 requires all federal agencies to incorporate environmental justice into their missions by identifying and addressing disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of their programs and policies on minorities and low-income populations and communities. The proposed actions in this *Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* are not expected to result in significant changes in the socioeconomic environment of the project area, and therefore would not be expected to have any direct or indirect impacts on minority or low-income populations or communities. Therefore, environmental justice was dismissed as an impact topic.

